

The American people take a stand for peace

TURN TO PAGE 3



The family of a soldier killed in Iraq at the soldier's funeral in Lansing, Mich.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Also in this issue:

6 Fresno homeless face challenges 7 Immigration fight escalates 8 L.A. hospital downsized

America vs. the corporations: Can we save democracy?

In a recent speech, former speaker of the U.S. House Newt Gingrich essentially called for the elimination of free speech to give the government a freer hand to “fight terrorism.”

While his comment prompted outrage from many, no one should be surprised. Gingrich’s proposal would be just one more step along the path to outright fascism in America. We are already dangerously far along that path, and the economic downturn that is now under way in our country means we will see the push toward fascism accelerate.

Since 9/11, the government — with the “bipartisan” support of a broad spectrum of Democrats and Republicans — has step by step nearly done away with our political freedoms. The PATRIOT Act, various executive and administrative measures, and the Homeland Security Act, among other laws, have shredded the Bill of Rights and expanded the power of the government to spy on us, to monitor our political activities, to imprison us, even torture us. We have seen more intimidation of the press and restrictions on press freedom,

and the passage of laws weakening our right to a fair trial and allowing arrest and detention without charges. Add to this the CIA’s “rendition” system of secret international prisons and torture chambers. (There are also hundreds of concentration camps across the U.S. built during World War II, the McCarthy period, and in more recent times, empty and waiting to be filled with “enemies of the state.”)

The picture is clear and ugly: our right to speak, to protest, to organize is being steadily eliminated, and any of us can be labeled a “terrorist,” snatched off the street and thrown into prison and tortured, without charges or even a trial.

This push to eliminate democracy and replace it with the open dictatorship of the corporations is no right-wing agenda. It’s rooted in how the global economy is evolving, and how workers are responding to that evolution. Globalization and labor-replacing technology are creating an unheard of polarity of wealth and poverty. On one side is a vast new class of impoverished people who have no stake in continuing to support the market



economy, and on the other side is a class of billionaires, represented by the giant corporations, who have no intention of giving up the market economy that made them wealthy. The poor are forced to fight for a new society that distributes the necessities of life to everyone, regardless of whether they have any money. If democracy was allowed to continue, the new class of poor, who are fast becoming the majority of the workers, would do away with the market economy. So the billionaires, waving the banner of the “fight against terrorism,” are doing away with democracy.

The growing slump in the housing and auto markets and the rising claims for jobless benefits make clear the economy is headed into recession, and perhaps something worse. This will mean even more workers thrown into

struggle against the system, which will only accelerate the drive toward fascism. The dire nature of the situation facing us only makes all the more clear that we, the workers, must see ourselves as a class with our own interests, separate and apart from those of the billionaires. The workers need to take the political and economic program of the poor as their program. Our recognition of this must be expressed in part through our creating our own media, because the corporate controlled media are unable to tell the whole truth. And our political independence must also be expressed in the creation of our own working class political party as a weapon in this struggle; the Democratic Party is just another face of the corporations. Our struggle is not just for freedom, but for life itself.

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

The People's Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can't or won't feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win — the capitalists or the growing mass of poor — will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society “by the people, of the people, for the people.”

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Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 600 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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The American people take a stand for peace

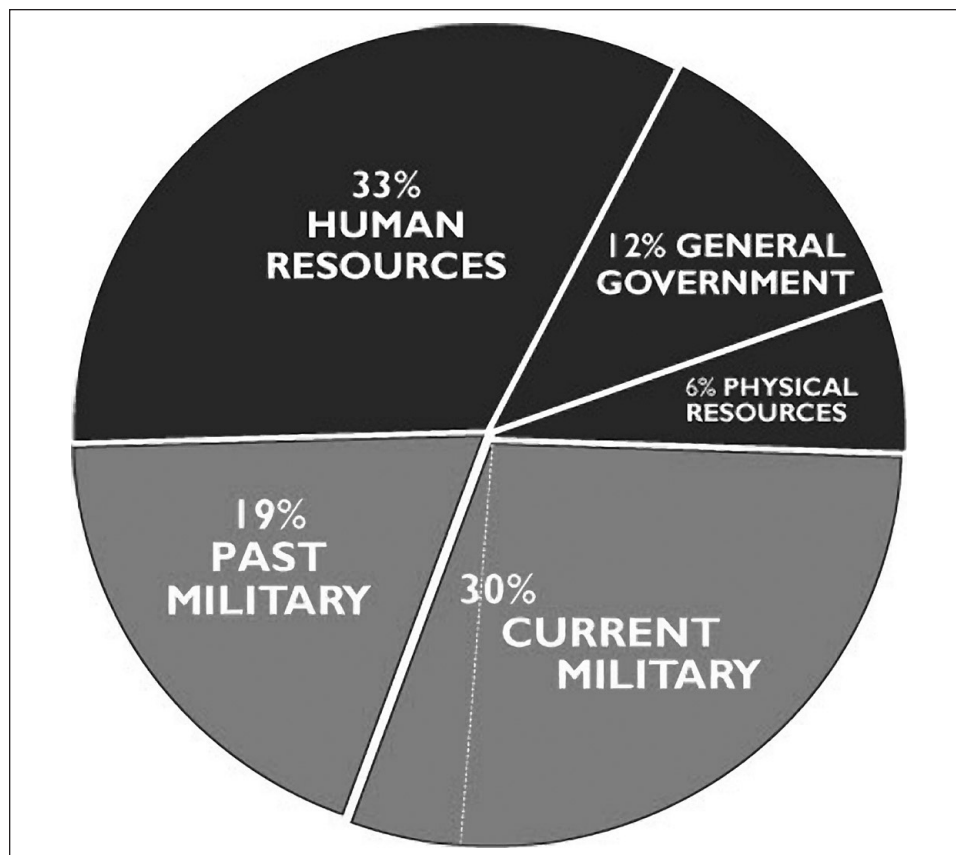
COVER STORY

The Democrats took control of Congress in January amidst great fanfare and calls for bipartisanship. They owe their moment of glory to the record number of Americans who voted against the Iraq war and blatant government corruption. Some of these voters probably believe the Democrats will actually take action in their interest. Chances are, many others knew, when in the voting booth, that the Democrats wouldn't make the changes they sought. Why not?

Democrats may fight for a few pet programs, but when it comes to big issues like war or poverty, they can't do anything different than the Republicans. Regardless of how nice an individual politician may or not be, both parties serve the same corporate masters. The price tag for the 2006 mid-term elections was an astounding \$2.6 billion or more. The average cost of winning a senate seat is almost \$8 million. Where did that money come from? It came from the big corporations, those that profit from war and war production.

How, then, do we rid the country of corporate thieves and create a democratic, peaceful America?

Our starting point is to see the cause of the problem. That is, that capitalism is a system that profits from war and destruction. There's no money in human need. At the heart of the economy is the military industrial complex. The military industrial complex is the feeder industry that stabilizes the economy and



Total Outlays (Federal Funds): \$2,251 billion. About 50% of federal spending is for the military.

Graph courtesy of the War Resisters League: <http://www.warresisters.org/piechart.htm>

keeps the corporations expanding.

For example, it is estimated that the Iraq war will cost an inconceivable \$2.267 trillion. Where does this money—stolen from our pockets—go? It goes into the profit ledgers of a multitude of corporations who make war both imminent and possible. That is, Lockheed Martin, Halliburton and Boeing, which makes the \$283 million B-1 bomber. It goes to those industries that

provide the steel, chemicals, energy, science and transportation for armaments, and to the clothing, insurance and construction industries that provide the clothing, housing and healthcare for the 1.4 million-member armed services.

In this way, war provides the corporations with the stable market they need to accumulate profits that, in turn, guarantee their global expansion. There is no way to throw them out because the

machinery of the system works to protect them. If you take away the military industrial complex, you don't have industry. War is an integral part of and engendered by the capitalist system.

What makes the situation so dangerous is that today, the military industrial complex is the key element of the forces that have taken over the government. Their vision is a fascist America to protect their interests. The government, police and military are in their hands.

Only the masses of people can bring about change.

We revolutionaries are in a race for the hearts and minds of the people. We must show that the health care, education, housing and other necessities that are so desperately needed — and that are in plentiful supply — are not available to the poor under capitalism. The unprecedented \$563 billion military budget is draining the country dry. Imagine how many schools, hospitals, cultural and recreational facilities could be built with that money. Taking on this fight, exposing the politicians and parties that refuse to fight for the needs of the people, is the key to uniting the American people around a future of abundance and peace.

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— Barry, a prisoner

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How to end poverty

BY SANDY PERRY

In recent years a powerful movement for economic justice has emerged in America's churches and places of worship. More and more, we are realizing that our sacred texts call on us to go beyond charity. As one document from the Disciples of Christ states, "Our voices of justice, mercy, and peace must be boldly spoken to those powers that would stand in the way of God's resources being shared equally."

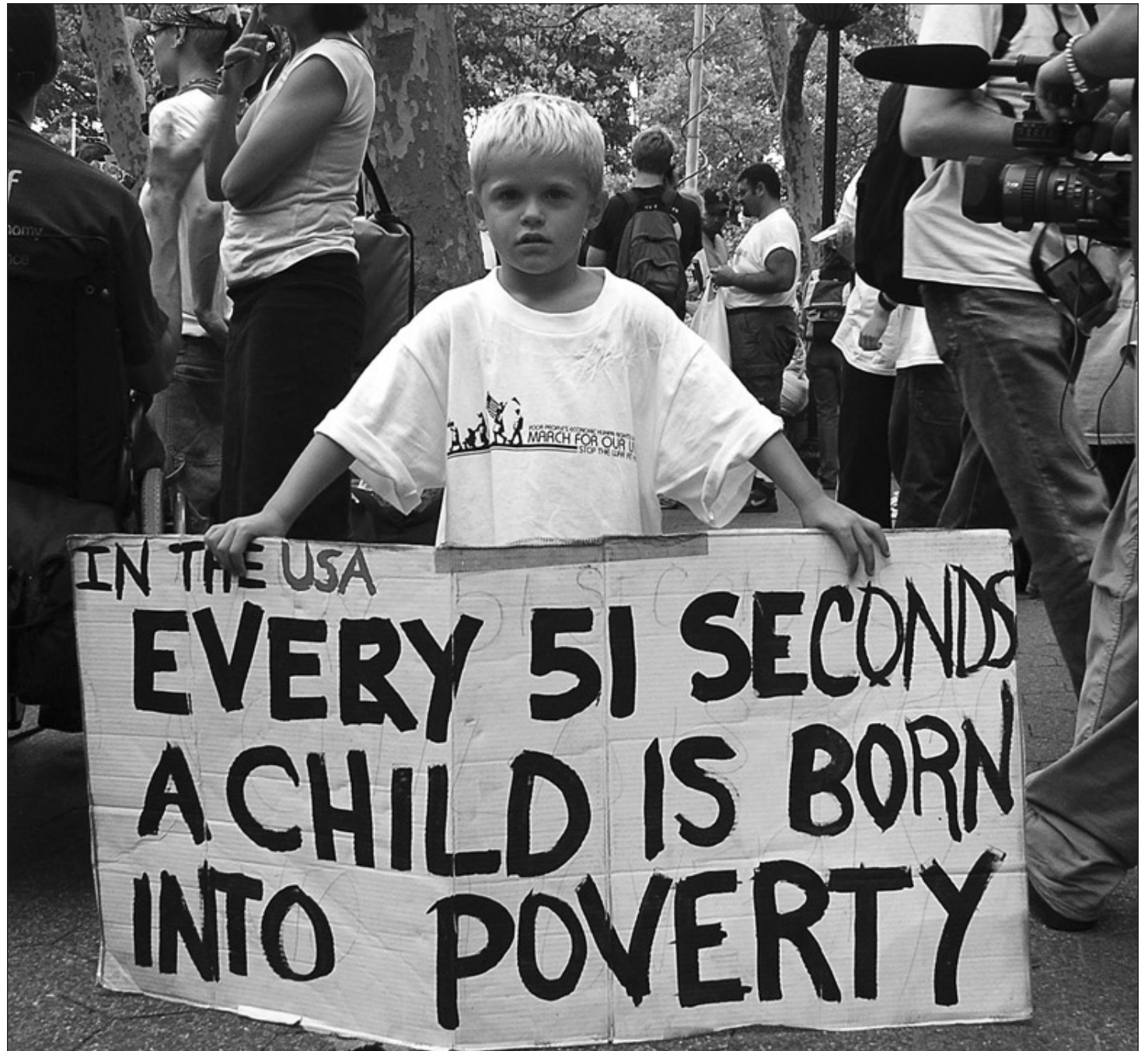
The most active faith-based social justice organizations (Call to Renewal, PICO, ICWJ, etc.) identify poverty as the central front in the battle for economic justice. Poverty underlies and largely determines all the diverse other forms of economic and social injustice in America. However, addressing this issue requires an accurate understanding of its causes and a strategy to end it.

Is poverty an aberration or incidental malfunction in a market system that otherwise effectively provides for human needs? Or is poverty an inevitable product of the capitalist system itself? Is the solution a set of incremental reforms, or an entirely new way of distributing wealth?

Revolutionaries have long argued that the problem is systemic, not partial. Capitalism—the system of hired labor—cannot exist without the poverty that forces some people to work for others. Modern enterprise and its products could not exist, and wealth could be neither accumulated nor enjoyed. Therefore, as Gandhi wrote, "the art of becoming 'rich' in the common sense is not only the art of accumulating much money for ourselves, but also of contriving that our neighbors shall have less."

However, under certain conditions in the past, poverty can and has been ameliorated through Keynesian reforms as was done in Europe and America in the mid-20th century. At that time, the integration of the neocolonial poor into the system for a while resulted in less poverty in the advanced countries.

Today partial reforms are no longer possible. As computers and robots increasingly replace human labor, fewer and fewer workers are required. Decreased demand for workers depresses



To end poverty, we are going to have to take back our government from the corporations.

PHOTO/KENNETH SHOOK

wages, exacerbated by global competition with workers in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. One recent example is the "export" of patients to other countries for operations and medical procedures by low-wage overseas health care workers. Unemployment, poverty wages, and destitution are expanding geometrically right here, right now in America.

Keynesian reforms are no longer viable today because a) with globalization there

is no longer a separate national market for them to impact, and b) governments are no longer even nominally independent from corporations, so they no longer have any interest in the general welfare, and will not enact these measures.

What is needed today is revolutionary change. We need to educate and organize the economic justice movement to prepare to seize back government from the corporations and use it to dis-

tribute wealth to everyone based on need. An economy based on private property no longer serves us. The time has come to fight for the cooperative society envisioned by the prophets and sages in all of our sacred traditions.

Sandy Peery is available to speak through Speakers for a New America. Call 800-691-6888 or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com.

U.S. Government Stops Describing Americans as 'Hungry'

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 12 percent of Americans, or 35 million people, could not put food on the table at least part of last year. So at some point each year, 35 million people in the U.S. have no food to eat, no food for their kids, but hey, not to worry—according to the USDA, they're not suffering from hunger. The government has announced it has stopped using the words "hunger" or "hungry" when describing the millions of Americans who can't afford to eat. Instead of suffering from hunger, the Agriculture Department now says these people are experiencing "very low food security." Problem solved!

Detroit high school students voice opposition to military recruiters in schools

Editors Note: Zoe, a Detroit High School student, sent this email message to other students. The vote at the school board meeting was unanimous for allowing the presentation of opposing arguments to military recruiters in the schools.

"I just wanted to notify everyone about the school board meeting this week at Southwestern High School. This meeting will determine whether "Finding Alternatives to Military Enlistment" (FAME) will be allowed to present an opposing argument in schools (not even just an opposing argument, but the truth) to military enlistment. We all know how heavily recruiting is done in Detroit Public Schools. We are facing an economic draft that is targeting us directly, using the fact that we're less likely to afford or be accepted into most colleges.

"But just because our education has been compromised does not mean we are only worth a college education if we are willing to sell ourselves over to the military. The fact that we haven't had an adequate education that's on a par with standardized testing isn't our fault. That is institutional and we don't have to apologize for low test scores by playing Russian Roulette. FAME being allowed in schools will present students with the opportunity to scrutinize actual military contracts and understand the



San Diego students protesting the war and education budget cuts.

PHOTO/JEREMY PRICKETT

deceptive language.

"We all know how popular JROTC (jr.nazi) is and for those of you who are considering joining the military. This would be an opportunity for you to carefully weigh your options. I know a lot of people who considered joining the military to get their college education paid for, or just to see something other than the same thing we've seen everyday. But, I want you

all to know that showing support for "Finding Alternatives to Military Enlistment" would be a way for Detroit Public School students to have people giving them real guidance and support, and would allow us a way to defeat the propaganda and have people in our corner for once. It'd mean a lot to me if we would actually express enough optimism to change things." — zoestarrdust@hotmail.com.

Ode to the horn player

By Tony Robles

This city isn't
Mine
Anymore

It isn't
Yours
Either

The developers
Smile a devil's
Smile

The splinter of
bones
Between their teeth

The condos
Have risen
Beyond reach

Broken dollar
Signs crash
To the ground

Cutting into
The soles of
Our feet

But the sound in
The guts down
Below is still
Here

The bellow,
The moan

Bubbling
Juices

Gumbo
Hot sauce
Fire

The horn
Player blasts
Through

Comes up
The elevator

Calling us
Out with his
Song

Invites us
To take it all
Back with a
Dance

Play, horn
Player

Play!

We're listening

The city
Is yours

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Our speakers bring out the connection between the struggle for peace and ending poverty. Speakers are leaders in the fight for immigrant rights, health care, water and utilities, education and peace.



off water! We need to say Stop! We're not doing this anymore!"

—Maureen Taylor, Director,
Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

"What kind of nightmare is it when 45,000 families in Detroit are without water? At night people come outside with their porch lights off with buckets and hoses attached to houses. I don't care what anyone says—you know you can't turn



General Baker, among the first to refuse the Vietnam Military Draft



Cheri Honkala, Director, Economic Human Rights Campaign, a leader of the poor



Maria Martinez, editorial board member, Tribuno del Pueblo, a bilingual newspaper

Homeless in Fresno win a victory, face new challenges

BY MIKE RHODES

FRESNO, Calif. — Homeless people in Fresno won a victory last month when a federal judge ordered the city to stop taking and immediately destroying their property. Shortly after the ruling, no trespassing signs went up near homeless encampments that sit next to a railroad line. Geno, a homeless veteran who lives next to the tracks, said, “I have lived here for three years and never been bothered by the railroad employees. They would come by and we would talk, but they never told me to move.”

A couple of days after the preliminary injunction was issued to the city, Geno says the signs went up. “A couple of weeks later, the railroad cops came by and told me to move on.” The bulldozer, clean up crew, and police arrived on December 13. Geno and the other homeless people living in the area were told to get out or they would be arrested and their property destroyed.

After a two-day stand-off, the clean up crews swept through the area picking up trash and then disappeared. The threats and intimidation had not worked. The homeless stood their ground, and Geno’s American Flag continues to fly over his home.

Mike Rhodes is editor of the Community Alliance newspaper in Fresno, Calif.



Geno, a homeless veteran, is among those struggling with the city of Fresno, Calif.

PHOTO/MIKE RHODES

Who is Leading the March?

Politicians toying with Black history in Fresno

BY REV. FLOYD D. HARRIS JR.

As we come around to Black History month again — it’s business as usual with the city and county of Fresno. The same old lying politicians are playing with Black history. The government has done a wonderful job of manipulating people into believing that they care about oppressed people, but in fact they receive more profits by making sure the people are clueless about their rights.

Dr. Martin Luther king Jr. gave his life to fight for justice for Black people, following God’s teachings. Every year we march in the streets of Fresno to celebrate the history of Dr. King, along with other civil rights leaders. There are tons of injustices taking place in Fresno—including police brutality, homelessness, dismantling of the Human Relations Commission, unemployment, AIDS, inadequate public education, environmental racism, bad air quality, bad water.

The City of Fresno received an “All American City Award” in June 2000 but it does not include poor people. This past year, the ACLU, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, and the Heller Ehrman Law Firm came to Fresno to file a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction to stop the relentless attacks on Fresno’s homeless residents and their belongings.

The California State Chapter of The National Action Network (NAN), under the leadership of state President Rev. Floyd D. Harris Jr., brought youths to clean up the homeless area to show the city of Fresno



Fresno homeless women tell their stories. Rev. Harris is at right.

PHOTO/MIKE RHODES

that they didn’t have to destroy their belongings. NAN, along with other local and statewide organizations, had a sleep-out on the steps of Fresno City Hall to bring more attention to the problems. We formed a prayer chain in front of City Hall to pray for our leaders. We gave out socks, coats, shoes, food, etc. to replace things that had been destroyed by the Fresno Police and the Sanitation Department.

The people in power want to get close to you so you will not hold them to public accountability. I protest against police brutality 365 days a year—but on Dr. King’s birthday I’m expected to march hand in hand with the politicians who are making life Hell for my

people and sing “WE SHALL OVER COME SOME DAY.” Malcolm X said there is too much singing going on in America and not enough “SWING.” I’m not a HYPOCRITE. I don’t eat from the oppressor’s table. He or she has nothing that I want but liberation for my people. When you have people in political office who cannot stand up for you when you are being abused then those representatives need to be recalled.

If Dr. King were alive today I know he would have been on the front lines with us denouncing the Fresno Police Department, Mayor, City Manager, Sanitation Department and the representative from District #3 for violating the constitutional rights of poor people.

Nothing has changed in America but one thing. The KKK have taken off their white sheets and put on blue suits and a necktie. These people now sit in powerful positions in the government: Lawyers, Judges, Police Officers, Doctors, Congressman and Pastors. They will lead when you are marching or participating in the City of Fresno’s 22nd Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration 2007, “Living the Dream: Let Freedom Ring for Peace, Justice and Healing for all.”

I want you to look back on the past year and ask yourself:

Living What Dream?
Living What Freedom?
Living What Peace?
Living What Justice?
Living What Healing for all?



Immigrants and supporters rally in Chicago earlier this year.

PHOTO//ADRIAN GARCIA

Immigration raids escalate battle for hearts, minds and soul of U.S.

FROM THE
TRIBUNO DEL PUEBLO

The recent raids at the Swift & Company meatpacking plants in six states have left hundreds of families in disarray. Churches were left caring for children left behind without parents, husbands and wives searched frantically for information on where their loved ones had been taken. The Department of Homeland Security, the news media and politicians are redefining immigrant workers from victims to criminals and in the process are rallying the anti-immigrant forces for yet another assault on the most vulnerable sector of the working class.

These forces have attempted to rally the American people to support criminalization of immigrant workers as a solution to the growing anger of all workers in this country over the corporate attack on their living standards and the corporate looting of the country's finances. This attack has been used throughout history, but was escalated last year with the introduction of HR 4437, which led to the massive marches of last spring.

Since the marches and groundswell of support for a pathway to legalization, the government has begun to implement some of the most draconian parts of HR 4437. Despite the mid-term election results that rejected the anti-immigrant positions of many candidates, some Democrats, some unions, immigrant rights advocates and organizations are currently negotiating legislation that incorporates some of the most onerous parts of the bill that was rejected. To what purpose are these debates and these actions being escalated?

Our country historically has been on a course toward the constant extension of civil rights to those that were denied access to the basic rights of any person (not just citizen) of this country according to the Constitution. The success of unions, the civil rights and women's movements, social security, labor laws and many other advances were based upon a moral interpretation of the kind of country and people we were.

There is an ongoing battle to redefine the values of the country so as to justify reversing this history. Therefore, justifying the denial of rights to anyone in this country (or in foreign policy), justifying homelessness, joblessness, denial of health care and deconstructing the educational system as we once knew it.

Clearly this is not an issue that affects immigrant workers only. Every part of our country must understand what the consequences will be to all of us if this trend is not reversed. We must be prepared for what lies ahead—increasing attacks on immigrant workers and in the end, on all of us. The losses of manufacturing jobs in this country were not because of immigrants, but from the corporations seeking to maximize profits. The force pushing immigrants to come to this country is the same force that moved the jobs out of this country. And yet in Mexico, Central and South America there are large movements to deal with their economic and political crisis—a struggle to transform them toward economic and political justice, eliminating the need for immigration. First, the working class should seek alliances with these movements and support them. Sec-

ondly, we must prepare for the ever-escalating attacks to divide us.

These attacks have split many immigrant rights organizations, religious organizations, unions and communities on how to respond and what position to take. On the issue of immigration, the only position we can have is full legalization. Anyone supporting anything short of this is supporting the shifting of our historical moral and political imperative and the destruction of our Constitution.

The Swift raids show us that we must organize an underground that protects and defends the immigrant workers as these attacks continue. Immigrant workers must continue to organize and speak from the economic position they are forced to adopt. The rest of us must redouble our efforts not to submit to the negotiating of rights and basic human dignities as the Democrats, Republicans and so-called "spokespersons" of immigrants are attempting to do as we go to press.

We must reject the efforts of corporate representatives in government to use "legalities" to turn us against one another so they can avoid the wrath of the American people for what they have done to our country and the world. We must organize and coordinate our activities toward real temporary solutions that will lead to economic and political decisions that can stand on our moral history. Fortunately there are many communities that have done just that and stood for the real America.

We will not continue to go back to the days of leaving children without their parents and tearing families apart...We are better than that!

'The system is broken'

More than 60 percent of Americans did not vote in November—because they don't have a party that represents them

BY DAVE RANSOM

Since the elections last November, the corporate media have been analysing the rise of the Democrats with much noisy punditry. But they have erased the overwhelming majority of Americans from their calculations—the more than 60 percent who did not vote.

In effect, the political analysts of the corporate media want us to believe that, if that non-voting majority had voted, they would have cast their ballots the same way as "the voters" did.

But in past elections, polls of this great non-voting majority have shown they are angry and depressed working-class Americans who want a party that will stand up for them and who know neither the Republicans or the Democrats are that party.

Their refusal to cast a ballot is not "apathy," as sometimes charged. It is an effective vote for "none of the above."

Neither the Republicans or the Democrats even hold a majority of registered voters. Each one is far outnumbered by independents, who comprise 42 percent of the registered voters.

In effect, the majority of working-class Americans, both immigrant and native-born, are a people without a party. And a great many of the people who hold their nose and vote Democrat are also among that majority.

So if there was a party that spoke to the true needs of the working-class majority in the U.S. today, it would win big time.

As the Democrats take control of Congress, it's important to remember they were elected by slightly more than 20 percent of the citizens—and by an even smaller percentage of all the people who live and work in America.

And, despite being made non-people by the media, the great majority of the electorate is asking for a new set of leaders to rise and form a party that actually represents them and their needs. During and after the election, one influential columnist, Bob Herbert of the *New York Times*, saw that clearly.

In an October column, titled "The System is Broken," Herbert noted that "millions of thoughtful Americans have become so estranged from the political process that they've tuned out entirely." Yet they are "hungry for a serious discussion of complex issues," he noted.

After the election, he called for "a coherent vision of the nation's future and a cadre of leaders who...can convey that vision convincingly and optimistically."

Though Herbert didn't say it, those leaders won't come from the established, corporation-backed political parties, the Republicans and Democrats. They will come from the working-class, grass-roots American majority—both immigrant and native-born—and they will build a very different kind of party, a "we-can-do-it" working-class party.

Who will those leaders be? Take a look in the mirror.

L.A. supervisors divert \$200 million from King Drew Hospital

BY DONNA J. WARREN, CGFM

LOS ANGELES — It's deplorable to spend over \$400 billion to invade and occupy Iraq, but not spend \$200 million to keep a public hospital open to serve the poorest people of Los Angeles.

Despite the testimony of residents, healthcare advocates, doctors, lawyers, and labor leaders, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on November 6 approved the downsizing of King Drew Medical Center (KDMC) from a full service teaching hospital to a community hospital.

KDMC *with the best trauma unit in the nation*, according to US News & World Report, rose out of the ashes of the '65 Watts rebellion. Arguably, one reason the rebellion occurred was because people were denied access to medical care and died getting to the nearest hospital, 15 miles away.

Patient care, already precarious, turns to disaster as the Board of Supervisors plans to transfer thousands of patients from the KDMC emergency room to Rancho, Olive View and Harbor Hospitals. Rancho does not have an emergency room, and Olive View is 40 miles away. The nearest hospital to KDMC, Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital, closed its emergency room in December 2006.

Why downscale a hospital in a community that needs it so desperately?

Willowbrook, where KDMC stands—like much of LA, populated by people of color—is slated for gentrifi-



We will continue to be denied health care unless we demand it as our right.

PHOTO/DONATED TO PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

cation. Developers want to tear down nearby public housing, take land and homes in Leimert Park, and create "urban renewal gentrification areas."

Poor communities are fighting back, but with limited resources against developers' mega billions, it's like David's toddler brother fighting Goliath.

Two years ago, Rupert Murdoch's LA Times did a hatchet job on KDMC for the express purpose of destroying its reputation in the public's mind so it would be easier to 'discredit, de-fund, and sell.' "Deadly errors and politics betray a hospital's promise" was written by reporters who had no concept of what or why KDMC existed but did know their job was to put KDMC on the chopping block for private profits.

KDMC has no more inequities than other hospitals and, in fact, is better than most.

KDMC is fighting for its survival be-

cause it sits in the middle of land that greedy developers want.

KDMC's problems stem from servicing patients who have no health insurance.

The job of government is to protect people, so why is the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors putting profits over people, diverting funding to other communities, and refusing to solve the problems?

The fight to keep KDMC open as a public hospital must not end.

We must keep all 233-beds, keep the neonatal unit and the trauma center, keep the emergency room, and ensure the hospital continues to offer all services, including high-risk obstetrics, pediatrics, neurosurgery, oral maxillofacial surgery, neonatal intensive care, ophthalmology, and cardiac surgery.

We must hold the board of supervisors accountable, and stop them from singling out KDMC. How many mal-

practice payments of more than \$100,000 has the board signed off for other county hospitals?

We must scrutinize the federal inspection report and correct the deficiencies, fight to restore the Feds' \$200 million in Medicare funding, and keep KDMC a teaching hospital to facilitate the adjacent Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.

Community Health Councils (CHC), Inc. is fighting to increase access to quality healthcare, develop empowered and active communities, and gain racial and ethnic parity in health and healthcare. CHC can be reached in Los Angeles at (323) 295-9372.

Donna Warren is a Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM) and a community advocate. She recently ran for Lt. Governor as the Green Party candidate.

Police arrest woman harrassed by neighbor

BY PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE STAFF

Editor's Note: Information for this article came from Maggie Melvin.

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The trial of Maggie Melvin, a 55-year-old African American woman charged with assault, ended in a hung jury. After moving to a new neighborhood in Columbia, South Carolina, neighbors poured flammable liquid on her lawn, placed human feces and dead animal parts by her front steps, sprayed her shrubs, and committed other acts of vandalism. She said, "The Sheriff's Department was contacted twice about the vandalism, but each time refused to write an incident report. When asked why, each deputy stated, 'Because you did not see anyone do anything.'"

On September 26, 2005, Maggie noticed a flammable substance on her plants. She saw Douglas Murphy, a white neighbor, in her yard. "The man was intoxicated. He came after me, striking my shoes twice with his lawn mower. I phoned 911 and returned with my camera. He came after me again, this time with the lawn mower wheels off the ground. One of the two sheriff deputies responding to my 911 call issued the intoxicated white male a trespass notice. But, eight days later, I was arrested for assaulting him. The intoxicated neighbor had no sign of a bruise, scratch, or abrasions. He trespassed on my property, damaged my property, and tried to run me down with his lawn mower. During the trial, he admitted he had no medical expenses or lost wages despite having filed such documents in Court."

Maggie said the Richland County Sheriff deputies

failed to get a statement from the one person of color who witnessed the incident, that one of the deputies was rude and intimidating, and that the incident report stated that she hit the neighbor, and it didn't include her comments. Maggie filed complaints against the deputy sheriff.

"At least three other families, all African American, have found unknown substances on their lawn. I mailed a letter to the sheriff, but received no response. I wonder if the Sheriff's Department is punishing me because I filed three complaints against two deputies," she said. "Although this incident occurred in 2005, it happened to Blacks in 1805 and 1905. A white could say anything against a Black, and without any shred of evidence, have a Black person killed, hung from a tree. Nothing has changed!"

Maggie Melvin's email is melvinalgie@yahoo.com.

Homeowners are hit by adjustable rate mortgages

BY CLIFF BAILEY

The painful reality of one of the greatest bait-and-switch scams in recent memory is beginning to unfold this year. That scam is the option adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM).

If you haven't already heard about ARMs—or been lured into one—they are a type of home loan whose interest rate (and payments) adjust up or down (usually up) every year or two, depending on rates set by the Federal Reserve Bank.

As a teaser, mortgage bankers have set the initial payment and interest rate well below traditional home mortgages. The “option” part is that you have the option, at least in the beginning, to pay a minimum amount each month instead of the full payment—but to your later, greater pain.

The financiers who are selling these things have advertised the low initial monthly payments and low initial interest rates to lure people into what the bankers knew to be very risky home loans. And they sold them and other scam loans to the people least able to make ends meet when their payments go up.

ARMs and other nontraditional loans are the tools the financiers have used to fuel the housing boom of the last five years—a boom, now going bust, which some economists credit with being about all that has kept the economy afloat. ARMs made it possible for many people to purchase part of the American Dream. But at what cost?

TRANSFER OF WEALTH

Just ask Gordon Burger, of Sacra-

mento, Calif. As reported by Business Week, Burger got a flyer from a local mortgage broker advertising a 2.2 percent ARM loan. The broker said it would save him \$14,000 in interest payments over the next three years. Who wouldn't want that?

But the broker didn't point out the fine print! Sure, Burger's monthly payment went down, but by making the minimum payment his loan balance went up \$1,000 every month! Meanwhile, housing values in Sacramento started tanking!

So now Burger is making interest payments every month, his loan balance is increasing every month, and his house is decreasing in value. And when his ARM rate increases on the next turnover, his payment will balloon.

This story is being repeated in every city and town across the country. But, of course, it is not the financiers that will pay the price for this insanity. The loan broker won't—he already has his commission. The lender won't—he's already sold the loan to a hedge fund. It's the homeowner, seduced into these confusing mortgages, who will bear the cost. It's yet another transfer of wealth from workers to financiers—from one class to another.

ROTTEN SCAM

And this is no small affair. Interest rates on an estimated \$1.9 trillion in ARM mortgages will be increased this year. According to those close to the industry, the interest rate on a typical ARM will increase from 3.6 percent to 5.6 percent—a 55 percent rise. That means an increase of \$400 on a mortgage of \$250,000, \$800 in monthly pay-

ments on a \$500,000 mortgage. For many of those who thought they were buying into the American Dream, it will just not be possible to pay this extra amount each month.

But just when foreclosure rates are climbing, grassroots organizations are springing up to help people deal with these risky loans. One of them, for instance, is the venerable East Side Organizing Project (ESOP) in Cleveland, which is educating homeowners with subprime loans about predatory loan practices and organizing them to take action. ESOP was founded during the Depression of the 1930s, when farmers were organizing against foreclosure sales and workers were organizing against evictions.

As the Depression unfolded, the first farmer to have his farm foreclosed—and the first worker to get evicted—thought what was happening to them was their fault. But when two, three, many farmers lost their land to the bankers...and two, three, many laid-off workers had the sheriff pile their things on the street, they realized it wasn't their fault—it was a fundamental social problem, a crisis of capitalism.

Today, the first lesson that homeowners facing skyrocketing payments and fearing foreclosure, even homelessness, need to understand is, it ain't your fault! It's a rotten scam. And the ultimate solution to that scam—and all the other scams that the capitalist class has played on us—is to organize our own class, the working class, to take power. Only by doing so will we be able to guarantee that everybody has a roof over their head—at a reasonable cost.

The mortgage crisis: why now?

BY DAVE RANSOM

Why is the mortgage crisis happening now? Here's the scoop. Right now, the capitalist world is awash with cash. Company coffers are overflowing. The billionaires have so much extra cash they don't know what to do with it.

That's because the technological revolution—computers, robotics, the internet—has increased productivity sky high. Put another way, the technological revolution is removing labor from production.

That's why corporate profits have risen to record highs. But it's a sugar high, a big hit that won't last long.

Here's why: An underlying law of capitalism is that real profits come from labor, the only thing that adds value. Remove labor, and all you get are pass-through costs. With robots, a buck's worth of steel produces a buck's worth of stuff.

So for some time, a big part of big capital has been trying to make money, not by manufacturing things, but by picking each other's pockets—and yours. The polite way to describe this is “speculation.”

A major way big capital has been picking pockets is by lending money to people they pretty much know are going to have a helluva time paying it back.

To do that, they've invented the kinds of mortgages (see accompanying story) that trap people into what amounts to a lifetime of payments—bigger and bigger payments. If these mortgages were good ideas, they would have been invented a century ago.

Then the capitalist scam artists bait the trap with the American Dream: own a home of your own. Now it's becoming the American Nightmare. And you're the star.

Who's doing this? The mortgage lender is only a front man. “Mr. Big,” as the flicks used to call them years ago, are the biggest, least public capitalist crime syndicates—things like “hedge funds” and their billionaire investors.

Buying up substandard mortgages is just one of their scams, but it's a good one. They buy home mortgages sliced, diced, rolled up—and insured. And when the mortgage defaults really hit the fan, guess who's going to pay the insurance.

The solution? Same old same old. Get rid of capitalism so we can get on with life. “This land is your land, this land is my land....” Take it back!

OUR MOST RECENT PROGRAMS:

Track 1: Consciousness Vision Strategy

Jerome Scott, Executive Director of Project South, speaks about three fronts of struggle in the US today: the anti-war movement, the immigrant rights movement, and the movement emerging in response to Katrina. Scott then addresses movement building and the first US Social Forum in Atlanta. Plus a spoken word piece by “Mama” Brenda Mathews.

Track 2: Community Building: Education and Expression

Educator George Lipsitz discusses the need for education to be connected with community and for community struggles to incorporate collective political education. Author Joanna Kadi shares her experiences and methods in building the power of writing among working class communities. Plus a poem by Suheir Hammad.

Radio Updates:

Before there was Youtube, before there was Myspace, there was the L A Sound Posse. The Sound Posse phenomenon results from the rapid technological changes that are continuing to transform radio and media today. The L A Sound Posse (www.lasoundposse.org) collects voices for transformation, from social justice to economics. You can link from their website to hear Howard Zinn on war and class, Luis Rodriguez on Operation Opt Out, Bruce Gagnon on the militarization of space and dozens of others. Google “sound posse” to link with other sound posses.



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LET THE NEW YEAR BRING MORE RESISTANCE

BY GENERAL BAKER

As we approach January of 2007, the people of Michigan in general, and Detroit in particular, are seeing a bad situation getting worse. The crisis in the auto industry is having a devastating effect on our lives. Not only do we face the issue of plant closings, but the buy-outs being offered to auto workers is massive: 38,000 Ford workers signed up for buy-outs; 34,000 GM workers and 2000 Delphi workers, making a whopping total of 92,000 auto-workers taking buy-outs between now and September of 2007.

These buy-outs may offer some immediate, short-term relief for the retiring workers, but all of the hope is lost for auto-worker jobs for their children and grandchildren. Those jobs are gone. On top of that, at the Ford plants, the CIA and Secret Service have set up recruiting offices inside the plant to attract some of these workers into the government to further defend the state.

On other fronts, Detroit has the second largest number of home mortgage foreclosures in the nation, and another 67,000 homes are up for foreclosure for back taxes for 2007 in Wayne County. The homeless population in Detroit is rising steadily as the residents lose more and more homes. Michigan has the highest unemployment rate in the nation. The Detroit crime rate is second only to St. Louis, Missouri. Thus, the stage is set for an increased resistance to the forward march of corporate control. It is in this light that we celebrate the New Year. Let the year 2007 mark an increase in the battle and resistance

General Baker is an internationally known labor leader. He was one of the first to refuse the Vietnam Military Draft and a leader of the Detroit wildcat strikes in the 1960s. He is available to speak through Speakers for a New America. Call 800-691-6888 or email info@speakers-foranewamerica.com.



Auto workers protest at Delphi headquarters in Troy, Mich. last August.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Is our justice system working for us?

BY WILLIAMX AKBAR

Is the American justice system serving the people of this nation in a just manner? I can't believe the many abusive reports in the daily news or the letters that I receive from family members who have someone in prison. How many innocent men and women are sentenced to die for a minor crime? Police brutality is another injustice that the government administrators turn their head from. This makes me think about the injustice battle that my good friend Rev. Edward Pinkney in Benton Harbor, Mich. is up against. So, I ask—is this really the land of the free?

Another item of interest is that many of us are in denial about racism and discrimination. We have forgotten that Jim Crow's second and third generation is still alive today, and they live right next door to some of us. Again, I can't help but think about the hard times Rev. Pinkney is fac-

ing. The Berrien County court system is trying to use this brother as a stool pigeon. But thank GOD for the many brothers and sisters of all colors that are supporting him. Regardless of the Black on Black, Black on White, White on Black crimes, we must all stick together to make a difference. I admire the many individuals in the world today who are trying to make a difference regardless of skin color.

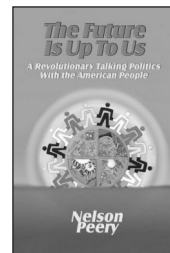
We are in a very serious human rights struggle. There are many violations, and the biggest battle is the violations of our water rights. This is a part of the injustice system working against us. We will march until our voices are heard in Lansing and Washington, DC, and then around the globe to the United Nations.

WilliamX Akbar is a community activist from the Highland Park Human Rights Coalition in Michigan.

THE FUTURE IS UP TO US!

How important are the youth to revolution?

Editor's note: This column is excerpts from the book, "The Future Is Up To Us: A Revolutionary Talking Politics with the American People," by Nelson Peery. Send your thoughts to info@peopletribune.org. To order the book, send \$12 to Speakers for a New America Books, c/o People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.



First, who are the youth today? Today, 10- and 12-year-olds have to make decisions about drugs and sex and their place in society. The youth are becoming younger and we must learn to approach them.

The youth have played very, very important roles in every revolution. If you go back to the American Revolution, for example, to the key battle at Brooklyn Heights, George Washington wrote in his diary that over half his army was 15 or under. Now, does that give you an idea about how important the youth were to the American Revolution? Nobody ever tells you this.

Wherever we look in any revolution we find the youth playing a very special role. They play that role because they are youth. Many don't have a family to feed and often they don't have a job to go to everyday. They can spend time passing out leaflets and participating in street demonstrations. They can spend hours in chat rooms and building web sites.

Moreover, since they are youth they aren't settled into any specific economic class. They don't have the political outlook of the workers. They are not old enough; they haven't been there long enough. What they do have is morality.

We keep hearing about how terrible young people are. Yet, the most moral group in a society is its youth. They have ideals, they are looking for something that's better than what they have. The youth are in an objective position to play an important role in the revolutionary process.

The left has always wanted to organize the youth, but have never been able to find the openings. Now, it's just beginning to open up. As the maxim goes, "Whoever gets the youth is going to win this revolution." I add that whoever gets the youth are the ones who appealed to their morality, not to their material well being.

We have a very, very big youth movement in the United States. It is pretty unmanageable, but it is a movement. The youth know what's happening. What they see is that there isn't any future for them. They know they can't make it under this system. Their rebelliousness sometimes takes on an anti-social character. That's not their fault; that's our fault. We are the ones responsible to see to it that the youth are pulled in the proper direction. The objective reality is that they do not have a future in this system.

The youth are going to be pulled in either to the fascist skinheads or to the revolutionary movement -- to something that says, "Look, let's change this thing." Again, they're not saying, "Let's change it so we can make some money." They are saying, "This is wrong, this is no good, this thing sucks, let's change it." The people who say this, too, are the ones pulling the youth towards them.

There has never been the potential, the revolutionary potential, amongst the youth that we see today. The objective situation is ripening. We had better be sure we have something to say.

Fighting Kellogg's in Battle Creek, Mich.

BY SANDRA REID

Peggy Glave has fought Kellogg's since the 1960's when her family got a life-threatening disease because of the company's unconscionable actions. Her goal has been to get the truth out about how corporations like Kellogg's rule the city, state and world.

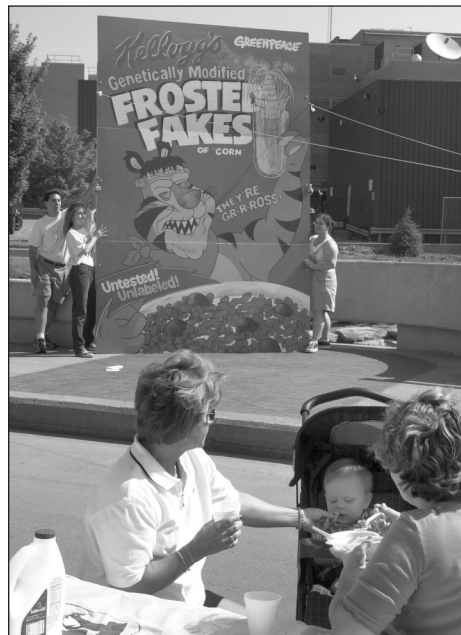
"Kellogg's tore down 80 buildings all at once that the city of Battle Creek had given them without any safety precautions. For over 10 years, we were inhaling 100-year old pigeon manure that had been sitting on those roofs. Kellogg's could have killed all of the funguses so it wouldn't blow around. Myself, and eight other people in a two-block radius from my house got Histoplasmosis, a disease that grows in pigeon droppings. Others got TB, Meningitis, and cancer," said Glave. "Two in my family had a cancer skin fungus that was coal black and the size of a giant powderpuff. You could push and it would move like jello. Doctors were dumfounded. That was in 1977. Later, I was used in experimental medical tests. I almost died. They didn't give me the medicines that would have cured me."

Glave sued Kellogg's, the Kellogg's Foundation, and the University of Michigan for using her in the medical experiment. But, "Kellogg's got the case thrown out. I took it to the state, but it

was thrown out. It wasn't the money—I wanted someone to stop it," she said. "The corporations write the laws. They own the doctors. They train them and tell them what to do and not do. They give the money to control them."

Glave formed an organization to expose Kellogg's. "The City gave a big community development grant to Kellogg's. They built the Kellogg's Foundation and World Headquarters with those funds. For this, they were to create 600 jobs. Instead, they moved more jobs than that to Mexico. To cement the deal, the Detroit Mayor came in to meet with the churches. Then the biggest sell out took place while everyone was drunk and hung over at the Kellogg's union meeting. That's when the jobs were moved out. When people found out, some committed suicide. People only see when they get hit. Kellogg's used the funds for 'economic development,' but the people became poor and homeless," said Glaves.

"People who expose Kellogg's have been found dead or end up in prison. Robert Mitchell, who ran for City Council was framed and imprisoned. They get rid of who-ever they want," she said. "The governors of Michigan, whether Democrat or Republican, brag about how the Kellogg's Foundation gives them money. But once they take the money, Kellogg's dictates how it's



Activists (background) protest genetically modified ingredients in Kellogg's cereal.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

used. When you don't have a way to prosecute them — they are untouchable. The Democrats are the ones that allow it," said Glaves. "And, every-time there is a war, they make a mint providing the rations." Glave says that Kellogg's took over the charities, too. "We need to tell people that when they give to a charity they are keeping the Kellogg's 'charity economic development' going.

It's a system that gives write offs to the big corporations, and it started right here in Battle Creek."

NATIONALIZE KELLOGG'S — AND THE FOOD INDUSTRY

The Kellogg's empire started in 1909, becoming one of the world's largest producers of breakfast cereals. The Kellogg's Foundation started in the 1930s, becoming the world's most powerful foundation. The Foundation's mission is about improving children's lives. But, after Kellogg's moved its cereal production to Mexico to earn greater profits, child hunger increased dramatically. In 2005, 19 percent of Michigan children received food stamps. In Calhoun County, the number more than doubled — from 11 percent in 2000, to 24 percent last year. Meanwhile, Kellogg's fourth quarter profits in 2006 rose 3%. At a time when 35 million Americans couldn't put food on their table for part of last year, Kellogg's 'spirit of charity' flies in the face of reality. Food giants are steadily increasing their profits through automated production which produces mountains of food with few workers, creating more poverty. *We have to ask: Is it right that children go hungry because corporations own the food?*

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE —

For private corporations, and not a drop for residents

BY MARIAN KRAMER,
MICHIGAN WELFARE RIGHTS
ORGANIZATION

DETROIT — The struggle over water shut-offs and lower sewage rates in Detroit, which has been going on for over four years, is now at an intense level. Over 45,000 homes had their water shut-off and these figures are increasing. We receive daily calls from residents complaining about water shut-offs. The battle lines have been drawn between the residents of the City of Detroit — who are the rightful owners of the Detroit Water and Sewage Department (DWSD)—and the Directors of the Water Department: Victor Mercado, CEO (who is privatizing certain departments of the water department), the Detroit City Council, the Mayor of Detroit and the 88-year-old Federal District Court Judge, John Feinkens, (referred to as the Water Czar).

The community was told to submit a plan to solve the water crisis. We submitted the Water Affordability Program. It was designed by Attorney Roger Colton, who was hired by a

Coalition: Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, Michigan Poverty Law Center, Michigan Legal Services and others. The Water Affordability Program was passed by the Detroit City Council and the Detroit Board of Water Commissioners with the scheduled implementation date of July 1, 2006. The Detroit City Council instructed the DWSD to hire Roger Colton as the Consultant to develop the program's policies. Roger completed that task, but we still do not have a Water Affordability Program in place. The implementation of the Water Affordability Program has been sabotaged. Non-elected officials are making decisions with the support of elected officials to prevent the Program from being implemented. No non-elected official has the right to make decisions contradicting City Council decisions.

Well, we have exhausted all of the legal steps and now it is time to organize! We are calling on all suburb residents. We must fight together because the elected officials in the Cities and Townships are protectors of the corporations and are moving toward privatization of

our water. They are trying to divide us by saying that Detroit is overcharging suburb residents for water. It is the officials who are overcharging residents of both Detroit and the suburbs. Meanwhile, research will show that corporations who use the water for their manufacturing are not being made to pay their fair share. Our victory will be in leading the fight — together — for quality water and keeping it public.

The City of Detroit, along with its suburbs, controls one of the nation's largest water and sewer systems, a network of plants, pumps and pipes that serve 4.3 million people. They are involved in a 30-year fight over whether the Region will take over the Detroit Water and Sewage Department, a further step toward privatization. This fight is controlled by Judge Feiken who serves the corporate interests. It is time to organize! Join the Spring Offensive.

Call Michigan Welfare Rights Organization for more information at (313) 964-0618 or visit our website at www.mwro.org.

FROM THE EDITORS

Water is a \$100 Billion industry in America and growing fast! The giant water corporations—like Suez, Vivendi, and RWE—are set to make mountains of profit by taking over the remaining 85% U.S. public water companies. Who will afford the soaring rates? The only solution is to take over these huge corporations and make them public, not private property, so every human being has water.

Send the People's Tribune stories about your water struggles. Write PT, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654 or email info@peopletribune.org

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MICH.

UPDATE FROM REV. PINKNEY

Rev. Edward Pinkney made a motion for a continuance in his re-trial for “voter fraud.” The court ordered the transcript of the first trial, but at the expense of Rev. Pinkney, who had to put up his home as collateral. Hugo Davis, his lawyer, moved for a continuance of the trial date to March 13, 2007, because the court failed to produce the transcript in a timely manner. The motion was granted.

In December, Rev. Edward Pinkney’s attorney filed a motion for a Direct Verdict to Squash the Information and to dismiss counts three to five of his charges. These counts are in violation of his constitutional rights/due process. The statute of being in possession of absentee ballots creates a felony offense, but there was no evidence presented at the preliminary examination that showed that Rev. Pinkney had any knowledge that it was illegal to possess and/or deliver absentee ballots.

Everyone’s support is needed at an important hearing on several constitutional issues on January 25, 2007, at 9 a.m. at the Berrien County Courthouse, 811 Port Street in St. Joseph, Michigan. Call 269-925-0001 for information.

“It’s hard to figure out who’s decent to vote for. I want someone to do what they say they are going to do. Do it for the community and world. Nobody is fair anymore with the heart or mind. We have to stand up in a unity and make them quit. If we don’t, they will do us any kind of way. We can’t let that happen. We have to stand up.”

— **Marquette Coates**

“Police had a guy on the ground telling him to put his hands up. They had guns to his head, beating him. I thought— what is the problem? He’s down. They told me to mind my own business. That symbol on the side of police cars that says “Serve and Protect”—there’s no such thing in Benton Harbor. One day I was stopped three times moving about my apartment complex. I asked an officer, why? He said, ‘I don’t need a reason.’ A lot of poor are scared to speak up. They need to get that fear out of them. If they know someone will be at their back, they’ll speak up. The harassment is related to the redevelopment. They want everyone to move since the jobs are leaving. I see all these homeless kids out here. I hate to see hungry people. I’ll feed anybody.”

— **Mattie Smith**



Mattie Smith (left) and Marquette Coates.

PHOTO/SANDY REID

“A Berrien County Circuit Judge sentenced a 16 year old to 16-1/2 to 50 years in prison for robbery of the Nextel Telephone Co., despite that nobody was hurt. I heard the young defendant manage to utter this through a heavy row of tears. The Department of Corrections has one thing to offer a

teenager and that’s bitterness. It takes a cold-blooded, heartless individual to damage a child. Since the Judge was white and he was Black, she felt that she did her honorable duties. And believe me, it’s a conspiracy to get rid of Blacks....corruption and racism is alive in Berrien County. Please don’t wait until it hits home. Join together and have corrupt judges and prosecutors removed. I urge all Pastors to bring your congregations together as one, and rid ourselves of these wrongs and bring in the right.”

— **Craig Shivers, prisoner**



Rev. Pinkney.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY

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WHIRLPOOL VS. THE PEOPLE

Rev. Pinkney went to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board of Trustees, a special meeting in Lansing, to challenge Whirlpool’s takeover of Benton Harbor. Rev Pinkney spoke for the people in Benton Harbor — with its 70% unemployment, and 90% of people living below the poverty level. He asked why Benton Harbor, with so much poverty, would want an 18-hole golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus, a boat launch, and about 30 homes that cost around a million dollars each, built on city property? The City Council is voting on the golf course. This could be the last stand, but the battle continues for the people of Benton Harbor to keep their city.

Rev. Pinkney is available to speak. Call Speakers for a New America at 800-691-6888. Also, order a new film, “What’s Going on in Benton Harbor?” produced by Tri City Production, for \$10.

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